



# *Success Story*

## **PRESS OFFICE**

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### ROADSIDE VENDOR EXPANDS OPERATIONS

**BIRMINGHAM** - Shoe Sport International was started by John E. Mitchell in March 2002 and operated as a transit vendor. Mr. Mitchell purchased a trailer and one trailer load of shoes and operated from roadside locations throughout northwest Alabama. The Business offers primarily athletic shoes at an extremely affordable price and experienced tremendous growth during the first year of operations.

John was constantly being approached by individuals interested in operating their own transit business and by those wishing to start retail locations. He realized the opportunity to wholesale his products and, in late 2002, contacted the University of North Alabama Small Business Development Center (UNA SBDC) for assistance in obtaining financing for this aspect of the business--providing products to others interested in this business opportunity. With the assistance of the UNA SBDC and Citizens Bank in Russellville, he applied for an SBA LowDoc loan to expand his operation to supply products on a wholesale basis.

With this SBA loan, John was able to obtain inventory to start selling wholesale and to lease space to operate the wholesale portion of his business. The wholesale business did extremely well and the demand for the product grew so much that he started considering expansion of the business again. At the end of 2003, with the assistance of the UNA SBDC and Citizens Bank, he obtained another SBA LowDoc in order for the business to increase inventory to expand the wholesale business and to obtain a visible location on Highway 43 for a retail storefront and from which to operate the wholesale business.

Shoe Sport International located a retail storefront on Highway 43 in Russellville. In addition to shoes, the store also carries costume watches and socks. Shoe Sport is in the process of another expansion and will be adding an additional wholesale product line.

A website ([www.wholesaleathleticshoes.com](http://www.wholesaleathleticshoes.com)) was established for the company to expand the market area outside of Alabama, opening additional wholesale sales opportunities for the business. Today the business is primarily a wholesale operation. John has been able to attend industry trade show which has enabled him to acquire new inventory sources and the business is continuing its expansion.

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